The over-active mind of the narrator probes the world not with the intention of lifting the veil of reality to establish a connection between the self and the non-self, but for the excitement and gratification of an overweening intellectual pride. The narrator has rightly been described as an intellectual Peeping Tom, who minds other people's business in order to indulge his own egotism. He believes that "for real excitement there are no such adventures as intellectual ones."[10] With Obert, the narrator talks of ''the joy of the intellectual mastery of things unamenable, that joy of determining, almost of creating results/'[11] In his egotism, he arrogates to himself the role of the Divine Intelligence, whose prerogative it legitimately is to establish a comprehensive mastery over 'unamenable' things.

The narrator's mind, obsessed with the ambition of an 'intellectual mastery' over life, sacrifices feeling as an interference, and hardens the heart to save his "priceless pearl of an enquiry."[13] 'The only personal privilege/' which he wants to enjoy, ''from the whole business was that of understanding"[19] Ironically enough, what the narrator does not 'know' is that 'understanding' is not all. An objective understanding of the 'loss', the 'disintegration', and the 'doom' of the unfortunate, is not beneficial so long as 'understanding' is not aligned with moral responsibility. In other words, mere 'consciousness' without a 'conscience' lands him in an arid desert of barrenness and futility. It is not, therefore, surprising that the narrator could save neither himself, nor others. He says, "1 could not save Mrs. Server, and I couldn't save poor Briss."[1*] But he is nonetheless proud of the fact that he could guard his 'precious sense of their loss, their disintegration and their doom../ Henry James draws our attention to the truth that a consciousness lacking in true moral awareness is the biggest obstacle to human refinement.

The narrator has observed that Grace Brissenden, a forty year

old pfain woman, has become pretty and youthful after her marriage with Guy Brissenden. He believes that age grows younger at the expense of youth. Guy Brissenden, who looks old and unhappy,, confirms the narrator's hypothesis. "He looked almost anything - he looked quite sixty/'[15] The narrator also observes that Gilbert Long, a boorish and stupid fellow, has changed into an amiable and witty man. With the assistance of Grace Brissenden, who becomes his willing pupil, the narrator hunts for the woman from whom Long is drawing his wit, Grace suggests Lady John as the woman, but the